

Office of
Environmental
Health
Hazard Assessment
P.O. Box 4010
Sacramento, CA 95812
www.oehha.ca.gov

*Strategic
Plan
2002*



State of California

Gray Davis, Governor

California Environmental
Protection Agency

Winston H. Hickox, Secretary

Office of Environmental
Health Hazard Assessment

Joan E. Denton, Ph.D., Director



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About OEHHA

The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) is one of six constituent organizations of the California Environmental Protection Agency (Cal/EPA). OEHHA is the lead state agency assessing health risks posed by hazardous substances. To fulfill this role, we provide scientific expertise to all Cal/EPA boards and departments and to state and local agencies to assist them in making regulatory and public health decisions. We also work with federal agencies, the scientific community, industry, and the general public on environmental and public health issues. Our additional responsibilities include implementing the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, better known as Proposition 65, and administering the Registered Environmental Assessor Program, which registers qualified professionals

who can help businesses in the State perform environmental work.

OEHHA's technical and scientific staff are divided among six primary sections: Integrated Risk Assessment, Reproductive and Cancer Hazard Assessment, Air Toxicology and Epidemiology, Pesticide and Environmental Toxicology, Registered Environmental Assessor, and Administration. A majority of our scientific staff hold doctoral degrees, master's degrees in public health or science, and medical degrees.

OEHHA's main office is located in the Joe Serna Jr. Cal/EPA Headquarters Building in downtown Sacramento, and we have a second office in the Elihu Harris State Office Building in downtown Oakland.

Strategic Plan

This strategic plan charts the direction we will take to accomplish our governing mission. The plan consists of four primary goals, which are aligned with the agency-wide *Strategic Vision* of Cal/EPA. Each goal is supported by a hierarchy of objectives and cross-media strategies intended to address California's environmental challenges in the air, in the water, and on land and to identify processes that ensure we will achieve measurable results.

OEHHA developed this plan keeping in mind Cal/EPA's balanced approach towards a sustainable California.

Vision

To be California's leading scientific organization for evaluating risks to human and ecological health.

Mission Statement

OEHHA's overall mission is to protect and enhance public health and the environment by scientific evaluation of risks posed by hazardous substances.



Values

The following principles guide OEHHA in meeting the goals and objectives of the strategic plan:

- Accountability
- Environmental justice for people of California
- Honesty
- Innovation
- Integrity
- Objectivity and respect for other opinions
- Open and cooperative communication
- Regard for staff
- Respect for wildlife and ecosystems
- Credibility
- Rigorous scientific analysis

Goals

To fulfill our mandate to protect the public's health and the environment, we assess contaminants in all environmental media—air, water, and land—to reduce the risks from chemical exposures and to further science in our areas of expertise. The following four goals encompass the priorities we have established for our strategic plan and illustrate our cross-media responsibilities as well as our role as a national leader in the field of health risk assessment:

Goal 1: Improve the quality of the public's health and the environment.

OEHHA's primary responsibility is to provide the scientific basis to protect the public's health and the environment. Although we are not a "traditional" regulatory agency in that we do not issue permits or implement enforcement actions for the majority of our programs, we provide California with the toxicological information necessary for making sound decisions involving public and environmental health related to risks posed by exposure to toxic substances. Our Proposition 65 program (the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986) often results in voluntary reformulation of products, which is a key goal of pollution prevention.

Goal 2: Advance the science for the evaluation of risks posed to the public health and environment, and provide risk assessment leadership for the State of California.

Through health assessments, OEHHA identifies chemical hazards and guides regulatory agencies in developing and revising chemical exposure guidelines, including standards for air pollutants, drinking water contaminants, hazardous waste remediation and disposal, and pesticide use. As the lead risk assessment authority for California, we recognize our responsibility for developing or promoting scientific advancements that will enable us to better assess potential risks related to exposure to toxic substances.

Goal 3: Provide quality, useful, and equitable service to the public.

Through our various programs, such as the Proposition 65 Program, sport fish advisories, and the Registered Environmental Assessor Program, we inform the public about risks related to exposures to toxic chemicals; however, an essential component of our mission is improving communications with and services for all stakeholders, including legislators, the media, and other government agencies.

Goal 4: Seek continuous improvement in the effective and efficient use of our internal resources to accomplish our mission.

We recognize that without sufficient staff training and development, and an efficient infrastructure, we cannot accomplish the three goals listed above.

Achieving Our Goals

Consistent with the goals and objectives outlined in the *Strategic Vision*, our strategic plan calls for us to provide health assessments and make recommendations to improve the public's health and our environment. We will continue to investigate and assess the health effects of exposures to air pollutants, pesticides, drinking water contaminants and other hazardous substances to determine potential environmental causes of illness, diseases, and deaths. These assessments allow us to develop health-based guidelines for affected areas and activities, as well as for sensitive populations, such as children and the elderly. To promote environmental justice, we will provide expertise to other Cal/EPA organizations to minimize any disproportionate impacts that hazardous substances may have on low-income and minority communities.

As a leader in risk assessment for the State, OEHHA will work to advance scientific methods and discourse for risk assessment processes. We will also serve as the lead agency for developing environmental indicators to aid the State in environmental policymaking. These indicators, which are scientifically based measures of the status of the environment and trends in environmental quality, will be one component of our expanded efforts to keep the public informed about the environment.

We cannot accomplish our goals without a dedicated, well-trained staff and an effective, efficient infrastructure. With our goals in mind, we will promote staff training, continually update and improve office procedures, and work with other Cal/EPA organizations to develop an integrated information technology system.

Performance Measures

We will derive several performance measures to determine how well we are achieving our priorities. These measures will help us to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of our internal processes and financial management. The measures will incorporate the collection and analysis of data on office functions and employee satisfaction.

We will also survey government agencies, industry, the scientific community, and the public regarding our services to help us determine where our operations need improvement. Measuring the following elements will help us gauge our effectiveness:

- Characterize the quality of OEHHA's output compared to similar scientific organizations
- Frequency with which agencies adopt or refer to our standards, guidance, or other criteria
- Acknowledgement among our stakeholders of the openness, clarity, and thoroughness of our decision-making process
- Overall ability to accomplish legislative mandates within sufficient time frames
- Number of staff serving on or making presentations to professional advisory committees, panels, meetings
- Participation and approval rates for our workshops and other public meetings and participants' increased knowledge and awareness of environmental health hazards
- Enhanced public outreach for each of our functions
- Distribution of our publications and visits to our Web site
- Overall satisfaction of support provided to our sister Cal/EPA boards and departments

Environmental Protection Indicators for California

As part of the implementation of Cal/EPA's *Strategic Vision*, OEHHA is leading the development of environmental indicators under the Environmental Protection Indicators for California (EPIC) Project. These environmental indicators will provide a means of assessing trends associated with Cal/EPA's mission, and will serve as the foundation of a results-based management system for the Agency.

An environmental indicator is a measure that presents scientifically based information on the status of and trends in environmental quality. Environmental indicators reflect pressures exerted on the environment by human activities, ambient environmental conditions, and effects on human or ecological health.

The EPIC project has developed a process to identify, select, and develop environmental indicators for Cal/EPA. Using this process, an initial set of indicators was generated. These were incorporated into a report (*A Framework for Cal/EPA's Environmental Indicator System*), which was released in April 2002.

The EPIC indicators are linked to Strategic Goals 1 through 6 in the *Strategic Vision* document, thus illustrating how programs implemented or data collected by a board, office, or department may relate to these goals.



*2002
Goals,
Objectives,
and
Strategies*

Goal 1: Improve the quality of public health and our environment.

Goal 1 is linked to the following objectives from the Cal/EPA Strategic Vision:

Identify and reduce emissions and public health risk of non-criteria pollutants.

Reduce the public health risk of indoor air pollution.

Reduce air pollution loading to land and water.

Maintain and restore all beneficial uses of water.

Eliminate or reduce and control adverse public health and environmental impacts associated with the use of toxic and non-toxic pollutants in surface waters.

Maintain and restore sediment and water quality such that fish and shellfish are safe to consume.

Eliminate or reduce and control adverse public health and environmental impacts associated with the use of toxic and non-toxic pollutants in groundwater.

Restore impaired groundwater to standards that protect the public health and environment.

Reduce the use of persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals.

Minimize and assure safe land disposal of solid and hazardous waste.

Minimize the risk to public health and the environment from contaminated sites.

Minimize the public health and environment impacts of industrial facilities and chemical releases.

Minimize the public health and environmental impacts of existing facilities.

Reduce the impacts of pollution from existing hazardous materials, waste, transportation and handling facilities or activities.

Ensure that inactive solid and hazardous waste facilities are safely closed and maintained.

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Objective 1A

Perform or review health-based assessments to support regulatory actions that protect public health and the environment.

Strategies

Develop action levels for drinking water.

Develop and publish public health goals for drinking water.

Provide risk assessment support to state and local governments, and other stakeholders.

Conduct and review risk assessments of chemical risks to wildlife and ecosystems.

Determine threshold quantities for reporting and toxic endpoints for prevention of accidental releases of hazardous substances.

Review health risk assessments for municipal waste incinerators and facilities subject to the Air Toxics Hot Spots Act.

Develop health-based levels for toxic air contaminants (TACs).

Review and update TACs for the protection of children.

Develop children specific toxicity criteria for chemicals at school sites.

OEHHA

Objective 1B

Provide health-based recommendations to protect public health and the environment.

Strategies

Provide pesticide TAC findings to the Science Review Panel.

Recommend to the Air Resources Board (ARB) protective ambient air quality standards.

Provide health-based recommendations to the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) for the development of regulations for worker health and safety.

Peer review the DPR risk assessments for pesticides.

Conduct epidemiological studies and toxicological risk assessments.

Provide health based recommendation to the ARB and Department of Health Services on indoor air issues.

Goal 2: Advance the science for the evaluation of risks posed to the public health and environment, and provide risk assessment leadership for the State of California.

Goal 2 is linked to the following objectives from the Cal/EPA Strategic Vision:

Assist the Department of Education in developing model school siting policies to avoid exposing children to pollution.

Promote the development, commercialization and use of effective environmental techniques and technologies.

Ensure all actions taken under California's environmental protection programs are based on sound science.

Establish consistent agency-wide risk assessment and risk management protocols using objective, scientific evaluations.

Ensure environmental impacts for all media are considered in environmental policy and management decisions.

Identify and assess the health and environmental risks associated with high-volume chemicals.

Coordinate agency programs for children's health.

Create a Plan for a Sustainable California.

Increase cross-border and tribal environmental initiatives and programs.

OEHHA

Objective 2A

Develop risk assessment guidelines and methods, and periodically review existing risk assessment procedures using objective, scientific evaluations.

Strategies

Develop, improve, and define methods and sources of information for risk assessment, such as databases and models, to enhance and streamline efforts of Cal/EPA, its boards and departments, and others, to predict the effects of chemicals on humans and wildlife.

- develop models capable of addressing multi-media transboundary data
- conduct epidemiology studies of the health effects of air pollutants

Develop guidelines for risk assessments of:

- chemical risks to wildlife and ecosystems
- toxicants that may affect infants and children
- school construction sites
- high-volume chemicals, such as fuel additives using life cycle analysis
- Air Toxics Hot Spots program
- clandestine methamphetamine laboratories
- incorporate changes to risk assessment guidelines and methods regarding parameters that recognize and protect susceptible populations

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Objective 2B

Continuously support exchange of scientific knowledge of human and ecological health.

Strategies

Create opportunities for, and participate in, an active exchange of ideas and information among the scientific community.

Identify, conduct research on and present to Cal/EPA's environmental policy committee, environmental issues that may pose challenges to Cal/EPA and its boards and departments in the next five to ten years.

Conduct training on the health risk assessment process and provide information on the toxicity of chemicals for communities at high risk of exposure within the state and also on both sides of the California/Mexico border.

Goal 3: Provide quality, useful, and equitable service to the public.

Goal 3 is linked to the following objectives from the Cal/EPA Strategic Vision:

Engage the public and business community in taking personal and corporate responsibility for environmental improvement through education and outreach.

Develop and use meaningful environmental and performance indicators.

Create an Internet-based, agency-wide, integrated information management system that is accessible to the public.

Expand and improve cross-media communications, collaborations and training.

Promote the implementation of Environmental Management Systems.

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Objective 3A

Provide information to the public regarding exposure to chemicals.

Strategies

Develop maximum allowed daily levels and no-significant-risk levels for listed chemicals under Proposition 65.

Develop sport fish advisories and consumption guidelines, and expand their distribution.

Identify art hazards in schools and list materials not to be purchased for grades K-6.

In collaboration with Cal/EPA boards, departments, stakeholders, and other appropriate agencies, develop and maintain a framework for identifying and selecting environmental indicators for California.

Publish a list of chemicals under Proposition 65 that have not undergone toxicological testing required by SB 950 or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act.

OEHHA

Objective 3B

Continue to improve implementation of the
Environmental Quality Assessment Act of 1986.

Strategies

Develop and update regulations for Registered Environmental Assessors' (REAs) registration criteria and performance standards.

Audit and investigate REAs to ensure compliance with performance standards.

Annually update and publish a list of REAs to assist with regulatory compliance and cleanup of hazardous substances at private sites.

OEHHA

Objective 3C

Expand external communication and outreach programs.

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Strategies

Encourage regular and open communication with Cal/EPA and its boards and departments, the Legislature, and other state and local government agencies.

Seek public feedback to improve customer service and improve communications with stakeholders so that they have a better understanding of OEHHA's actions and to ensure the transparency of our actions.

Increase public awareness of OEHHA's programs through expanded distribution of current advisories, fact sheets, press releases, Web postings, and other publications in multi languages as appropriate.

Actively support efforts of Cal/EPA and its boards and departments to ensure environmental justice for California inhabitants.

Train staff in the principles of environmental justice and their relationship to our mission.

Goal 4: Seek continuous improvement in the effective and efficient use of our internal resources to accomplish our mission.

Goal 4 is linked to the following objectives from the Cal/EPA Strategic Vision:

Decrease the use of energy and increase the proportion of renewable energy.

Recruit and retain qualified scientists.

Promote a “green” Cal/EPA.

Lead the effort to “green” California State government.

Conduct continuous evaluations of program effectiveness.

Expand and support cross-media communications, collaboration, and training.

OEHHA

Objective 4A

Reduce departmental vacancy levels.

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Strategies

Recruit and retain qualified employees.

Review and seek competitive compensation for staff classifications.

Ensure timely and appropriate exams are given to fill positions and promote staff in critical classifications.

Expand recruitment advertising efforts.

Promote training and other opportunities to enhance professional growth.

OEHHA

Objective 4B

Promote an effective and efficient infrastructure.

Strategies

Review, and revise as appropriate, department administrative policies and procedures.

Ensure all fiscal activities are accurately completed and made available, in a timely manner, to appropriate staff.

Strengthen internal communication and collaboration.

Support employee recognition activities.

Streamline contracting and business services procedures to more effectively and efficiently process contracts and perform other procurement activities.

Promote “green” and safe practices.

Encourage staff telework arrangements whenever feasible.

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Objective 4C

Identify and seek appropriate funding for all departmental activities.

Strategies

Identify and assess current and projected resource needs for all new and expanded mandates.

Identify and pursue appropriate funding sources for all mandated work.

Ensure all approved work for outside entities is appropriately reimbursed.

Seek additional funding resources for unfunded program activities.

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Objective 4D

Enhance information management systems to provide useful information to staff and all constituents.

Strategies

Improve staff's use and understanding of information technology and tools, particularly Internet-based applications, to meet the Department's mission.

Provide an integrated system to support increased access to internal Department business applications.

Enhance the Department's network architecture in the Cal/EPA building's shared network environment.

Improve remote access to departmental computer resources.